

Minutes of the January 30, 2006 Telephone Conference of the
Women and the Law Section Council

Call to Order

Mara Blatt, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:04 P.M., announcing a quorum with the following persons attending: Carmen Samaniego of San Antonio, Vice-Chair Membership; Lisa Hernandez of Plano, Vice-Chair Newsletter; Carolyn F. Moore of Lubbock, Secretary; Ralph H. Brock of Lubbock, Treasurer; Kathy Cannon of Austin, Chronologist; council members Ronnie Harrison of Houston, Deborah Mackoy of Plano, Tonya Carter of Houston, Teri Danish of Brownsville, Collyn Peddie of Houston; Melissa Dorman of Dallas, Chantell Crews of El Paso, Susan Hightower of Austin, and Shannon Dacus of Tyler; Judy L. Ney, emeritus non-voting member; and Carmen L. Perez, State Bar Board Alternate Advisor.

Ms. Blatt said that Teresa Oxford of Houston, Immediate Past Chair, and Misty Ventura of Dallas, Vice-Chair Membership, had an excused absence.

Approval of Minutes

Collyn Peddie moved, with a second from Tonya Carter, the approval of the minutes of the Section's October 17, 2005 telephone conference. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Ralph H. Brock presented a report showing that the Section had a balance of \$9,093.52 on January 29, 2006. His report was accepted.

Fundraising for Women's Advocacy Project

After a lengthy discussion on whether to continue to sell book bags that can be filled with books that have been collected by Ronnie Harrison, Leo Ney, and others, the Section Council decided that the Section would once again sell book bags at the Annual Meeting of the State Bar in Austin in June of 2006. Proceeds of the sales will go to Women's Advocacy Project, a statewide nonprofit legal organization that promotes access to justice for Texas women and children in need. Mara Blatt reminded all members of the Section Council to volunteer to help with the project during the Annual Meeting. Lisa Rodriguez suggested that any schoolbooks or textbooks remaining in Austin after the sale be sent to Costa Rica lawyers who are attempting to organize a library of English books.

Mara Blatt asked Section Council members to be thinking of more efficient ways the Section can raise money for Women's Advocacy Center in the future.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Annual Meeting and Continuing Legal Education -

Section Council members agreed that the Section would have its own annual meeting to honor recipients of the Section's Sarah T. Hughes Award and Ma'at Justice Award and to present continuing legal education. The Section's annual meeting will be at the State Bar Annual Meeting in June of 2006 in Austin, Texas.

Mara Blatt and Carmen Samaniego will prepare a syllabus for the annual meeting's continuing legal education program on health issues of concern to women, which will then be expanded and offered to lawyers across Texas. Ms. Samaniego will attempt to get contributions from sponsors and from the Travis County Women's Bar Association to help defray costs in putting on the annual meeting.

Chronology

Kathy Cannon said that she and Susan Hightower have gone through the State Bar Archives in Austin in search of documentation from the Women and the Law Section on the Section's plan to locate and interview women lawyers who have made significant contributions to the profession. They learned that very few lawyers have been interviewed and that at least eight lawyers who are 75 years or older still need to be interviewed.

Carolyn F. Moore agreed to review all of her files (minutes and newsletters) and send to Ms. Cannon and Ms. Hightower a list of the names of past chronologists and work they did on the chronology committee.

Newsletter

Lisa Rodriguez said that she talked with Kathy Casarez of the State Bar last week concerning the information needed for the Section's newsletter. Ms. Rodriguez said that she would send that information to Ms. Casarez in the next couple of days so that the newsletter can be sent to members very soon.

Nominations/Awards

Susan Hightower, Teri Danish, and Collyn Peddie volunteered to be on the Nominations/Awards Committee with Mara Blatt. The committee will meet via telephone to prepare the Section's nomination of Carolyn King, recipient of the Margaret Brent award, for the Sandra Day O'Connor Award. The committee will also select the winners of the Section's Sarah T. Hughes Award and the Ma'at Justice Award.

Website

Section council members agreed that the Section's website, which has been renovated under the direction of Teresa Oxford, is looking very good. Members were encouraged to send items and suggestions for the website to Ms. Oxford.

Membership

Mara Blatt said that Misty Ventura's efforts regarding ways to increase membership are ongoing.

Sarah T. Hughes Award Negotiations Progress Report

Mara Blatt said that she has talked with Beryl Crowley, Executive Director of the Texas Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism about the possibility of the Section and the Center joining together to award both the Sandra Day O'Connor Award and the Sarah T. Hughes Award since the two awards have the same criteria for nominees. Currently the Center gives two O'Connor awards – one to a judge and one to a non-judge. Judy Ney agreed to work with Ms. Blatt in writing a proposal for the Center's Board suggesting that the Board and the Section work together on the awards.

Old Business

Mara Blatt congratulated Kathy Cannon, Susan Hightower, and Teresa Oxford on their committee work for the Section.

New Business

Ralph Brock agreed to prepare a nomination for the Section to receive an Access to Justice Award for Section Pro Bono Work. He said that he would write about the accomplishments of Ronnie Harrison in getting donations for the Section to send to the Women's Advocacy Project for the past several years.

Mara Blatt encouraged members to participate in the State Bar's Judicial Poll, which will be on line through February 8, 2006.

Ms. Blatt stated that the State Bar has posted the position of General Council, asking those interested to apply or tell other lawyers about the opening.

Ms. Blatt said that in April of 2006, the Council of Chairs will elect two Section Representatives to the State Bar Board of Directors; one representative is to be from a small section and one representative is to be from a large section. Since the Women and the Law Section currently has less than 500 members, it should be able to nominate lawyers for the position of a section representative for small sections. However, since the Section was once classified as a medium-size section, having a membership that exceeded 500, Ms. Blatt was not certain that the Section could make nominations.

Shannon Dacus, Ronnie Harrison, and Teri Danish asked to be nominated for the position of Section Representative. Carolyn F. Moore and Judy Ney will find out if the Section can nominate representatives and if so, will forward the nominations of Ms. Dacus, Ms. Harrison, and Ms. Danish to Kathy Casarez of the State Bar.

Ms. Ney said that Texas Women Lawyers is having a seminar in Houston on February 10, 2006.

Adjourn

Ms. Blatt said that the next Section council meeting would be in Austin on April 8, 2006, from 10:30 A.M until 2:00 P.M.

Ms. Blatt adjourned the meeting at 6:13 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn F. Moore
Secretary
March 13, 2006